

OCONEE COUNTY

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/14

OCONEE COUNTY MISSION STATEMENT

Provide the highest quality services in a fiscally responsible manner to promote the health, safety and general welfare of all Oconee County citizens.

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Oconee County Board of Commissioners

Melvin Davis, Chairman



Dear Fellow Oconee County Citizens,

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners is pleased to provide this report for the fiscal year ending, June 30, 2014, from our elected Officials and County Departments. Many positive activities occurred within the county over the course of the past year. We are happy to share these highlights through this *Year In Review*.

As you are aware, our Tax Commissioners' Office will soon send out tax notices. Once again, Oconee County has continued with the current unincorporated rate of 6.686 mills. We are hopeful this will benefit our citizens as financial recovery continues from several years ago.

The Epps Bridge Parkway and 316 Corridor continues to grow and expand Oconee's commercial and retail tax base. During July, Best Buy became the latest major retail addition to Epps Bridge Centre. Easy access, along with strategic planning for future growth, has made this area appealing to retailers and shoppers. We continue to see medical offices and facilities choose to locate/relocate along the 316 Corridor. Continuing care facilities are planned and being constructed in the area of Virgil Langford Road. Again, easy access and convenience to shopping are luring developments with various medical facilities to the 316 Corridor.

Caterpillar continues to make a major impact in the job market with employee totals at 675 as of June 2014. The Epps Bridge Centre has increased job opportunities for many Oconee and area citizens. Likewise, medical office developments and facilities have added opportunity to Oconee's job market.

Transportation upgrades have been completed with the resurfacing of Salem Road in the south end of the county; a new traffic signal at the intersection of Highways 316 and 78 (westbound exit ramp); an additional lane added in Bishop at Highways 441 and 186; and an additional lane added at the intersection of Experiment Station and Government Station Roads. Construction will begin in the next few months to widen Mars Hill Road. Even though there will be inconvenience during the construction period, the traffic congestion will be significantly improved for many years to come due to this major project.

I trust that this *Year In Review* will provide you with facts and information that help you know more about your Oconee County. Feel Free to visit our website (www.oconeecounty.com) for more information or call me at 706-769-5120.

Thanks for all you do to make Oconee County a great place to live, work and play!

On behalf of the Board of Commissioners,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melvin Davis".

Jim Luke - Commissioner, Post 1

John Daniell - Commissioner, Post 2

Margaret Hale - Commissioner, Post 3

Mark Saxon, Commissioner, Post 4

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Phone: 706.769.5120 • Fax: 706.769.0705 • E-Mail: mdavis@oconee.ga.us

THE FUTURE

MARS HILL WIDENING PROJECT

Phase I of the right-of-way acquisition for the project was completed during FY14. Beginning in FY15 construction will begin starting from the intersection of GA 316 and the Oconee Connector. A three-year construction timeline has been estimated, with this phase spanning from GA 316 to Butler's Crossing. The project will consist of widening Mars Hill Road and constructing a new bridge over Barber Creek.

GDOT is in the process of permitting Oconee County to begin right-of-way acquisition for Phase II of this project, which will begin at Butler's Crossing and continue to the 441 Bypass on Experiment Station Road.

HARD LABOR CREEK RESERVOIR

Oconee County and Walton County have issued bonds to complete the dam construction and development of the treatment plant for the Hard Labor Creek Reservoir. This is a collaborative project which is estimated to provide adequate water for the two counties for the next 50 years.

To date, all of the land has been acquired, site prep has occurred, and Fairplay Road has been relocated to allow for the project to occur. Following completion of the dam and treatment facility, water will fill the pool, and a distribution system will be installed to transfer water into the Oconee and Walton County systems.

EPPS BRIDGE PARKWAY/316 CORRIDOR

The Epps Bridge Parkway Corridor continues to attract new restaurants and retail business. As FY15 approaches, Oconee County looks forward to the future of this area and its possibilities and opportunities. Virgil Langford Road runs parallel to 316 has developed into a medical community with doctor/dental offices and assisted living/medical facilities. We are fortunate to live in a vibrant community that has the ability to offer a wide range of services and products to Oconee citizens.



THE ECONOMY

In FY14, Oconee County's economy continued to rebound. As hiring began – and construction ramped up again – more people were employed, and the unemployment rate continued to decline. In fact, the unemployment rate rose above 5% only twice, with two months (Nov. & Dec.) experiencing rates under 4%.

Construction of new residential housing units increased significantly over rates seen a few years ago. The construction of the new Athens Ridge project near Old Macon Highway contributed greatly to the number of units permitted. However, over 300 single family units were permitted during the year as well. While some construction was speculative, many of these houses were contract homes, meaning they were sold before being built.



CAT Grand Opening

Expansion of medical services into Oconee County continues to be a major driver for the local economy. In the Hwy. 316/Virgil Langford Road corridor, numerous medical offices have been occupied in the last year – and more are under construction at present. Additionally, the Board of Commissioners approved a rezone request for Resurgence Park during FY14, which is anticipated to provide additional space for medical offices in that corridor.

Commercial and retail activity continued, especially along the Epps Bridge corridor. During FY14, over 20 tenants located in the new Epps Bridge Centre. This resulted in a significant increase in Oconee County's sales tax receipts, as well as creation of jobs for the region.

On a positive note, significant retail activity is occurring in areas other than Epps Bridge Centre. New construction is underway on outparcels in front of Lowe's. New retailers have located at The Markets at Epps Bridge, a 116,000 square foot development located directly across from this new construction activity. The area continues to further develop as a regional retail destination.

On the manufacturing front, the Watkinsville Industrial Park is fully occupied. Industrial Finishing Specialists, which opened in FY13, completed a recent expansion during FY14. Caterpillar has topped the 700 employee mark and the 1,000th was being produced during this same period.

The Economic Development Department continues to work with businesses large and small in order to identify opportunities for them. These include working with the Georgia Department of Economic Development's International Trade Team to enhance export opportunities for Oconee businesses, as well as data research for the locally-owned independent businesses. The Economic Development Department and the Chamber of Commerce have also collaborated to provide assistance to home-based businesses, a segment of the community that is often overlooked.



Construction at Gateway Technology Business Park



Dick's Sporting Goods at Epps Bridge Centre



OCONEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



The role of the Oconee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) is to maintain social order within prescribed ethical and constitutional limits while providing professional law enforcement, detention and communication services. This agency enforces the law in a fair and impartial manner, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the constitutional rights of all persons.

Patrol Division

The Patrol Division is currently staffed with 32 patrol deputies who work opposing 12-hour shifts to provide 24/7 service for the general public. Deputies are assigned patrol duties within each of the three zones that divide the county geographically. This promotes a quicker response time to calls and facilitates deputies becoming more familiar with and responsive to the citizens and businesses in each zone.

The Patrol Division is generally considered the backbone of the Sheriff's Office, not only because it is the largest component of the agency but also due to the function and variety of calls that deputies handle. Deputies respond to reports of crime, conduct traffic control and enforcement, perform many community functions and contribute to the investigative role through diligent preliminary and follow-up actions.

Patrol Deputies are well-trained, disciplined, and capable of assessing and responding to the changing needs within the county. Deputies provide swift emergency response as 'first responders' to all law enforcement related crimes, public disturbances, accidents, suspicious persons, alarms, assaults and general information calls. Patrol Deputies daily serve civil process (court orders) to include subpoenas, temporary protective orders, restraining and mental health transports. Deputies provide vehicle VIN verifications and funeral escort services for county and out of county residents passing through the county.

Patrol Division K-9 Team

The primary mission of the K-9 Team is to track fleeing felons, locate lost/missing persons/hidden instruments or evidence of crime, and assist in building searches for offenders. The division consists of two K-9 Deputies and their K-9 certified partners. Both Deputies have daily shift assignments and are on call 24/7.

During FY14, the K-9 Team responded to multiple drug seizure cases in Oconee and other counties. The team also assisted local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, tracked felony offenders, and gave numerous K-9 demonstrations in public/private schools, church groups, and community organizations.





OCONEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



Patrol Division Calls Initiated and Responded To in FY14*

(*Call types categorized as criminal, non criminal, and vehicle accidents)

Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 1,085 (deputies checking suspicious activity to determine if a crime occurred)

Criminal Acts: 5,829 (reflects criminal acts and general service assists to other agencies - not the total number of crimes committed in Oconee County)

Vehicle Tag and Drivers License Checks: 2,697 (deputies conducting investigations to verify lawful registrations and to determine criminal warrants / stolen property)

Civil Attempts: 2,376 attempts with 920 served and 248 returned (serving of court documents, usually civil litigation papers - returns due to wrong address, the defendant moving, or request of the court to be returned)

Agency Assists: 133 (our agency assisted other law enforcement agencies entering our county to investigate crimes occurring in their jurisdictions)

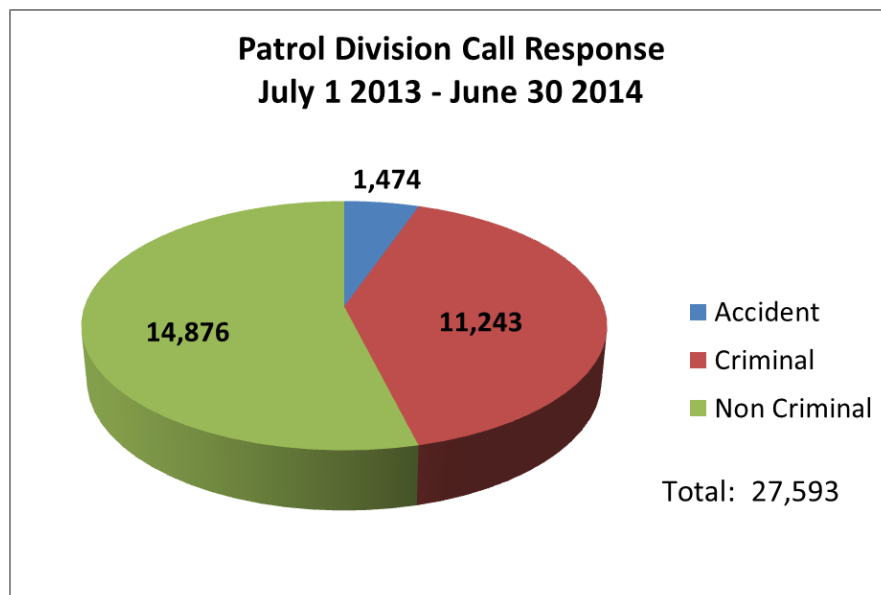
Animal Calls: 121 (domestic and wildlife in yards, homes, businesses to include snakes, opossums, raccoons, coyotes, etc.)

Welfare checks: 364 (this includes sick persons, injured people, and people that loved ones are not able to get in contact with)

Funeral Escorts: 81

Lift assistance: 7 (generally disabled or elderly citizens)

Child Safety Seat / Restraint Checks: 50-75





OCONEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



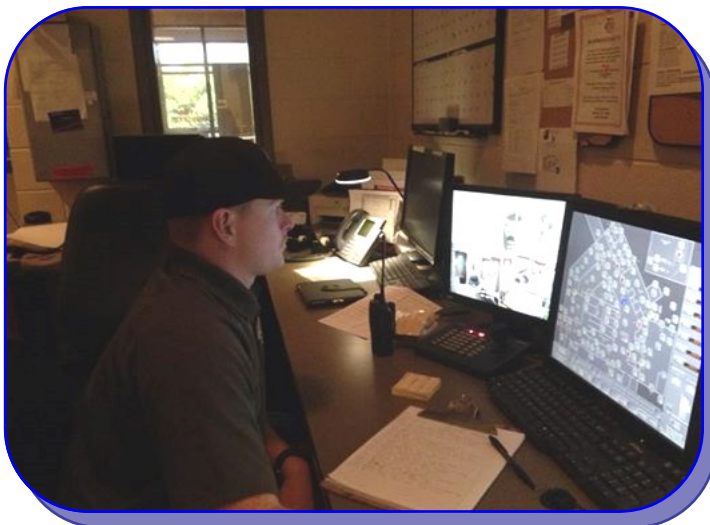
Jail Division:

The purpose of the jail division is to provide the highest degree of security for Oconee County residents in a professional and cost-efficient manner. Funded by SPLOST, the Oconee County Jail is a 137-bed facility supervised by 28 highly trained law enforcement officers. The jail ensures secure, constitutional and humane care for adult inmates consistent with the U.S./Georgia Constitutions and Georgia Jail Standards for inmates.

In addition to being one the highest liability facilities in the county, the Jail has ***processed over 1,500 charges since the fall of 2013.*** More than 1,000 visits from inmate friends and relatives have been logged. The Jail also serves the needs of multiple-user agencies including law enforcement, judicial authorities, attorneys, community service providers, clergy and other visitors. Among its accomplishments in FY14, the Jail installed a "Jail Tracker" booking system, successfully completed a major upgrade to its secure video visitation system, and finalized accreditation for the *Jail Medical Clinic* by the prestigious Medical Association of Georgia. The Jail also serves the surrounding community by housing inmates from other space-strapped counties

The 28 men and women who work at the jail are well trained and capable of responding to any emergency or situation within the jail setting. Depending on the severity of their charges and criminal history, inmates are classified as one of three classes of inmates: minimum, medium, and maximum. Jailers work in 12-hour shifts to promote an orderly, safe environment for inmates, staff, and the general public. Additionally, jailers are also responsible for:

- Proper booking and release of new detainees
- Ensuring federal authorities are notified of any illegal aliens taken into custody
- Making sure that all inmate disciplinary and grievance procedures are followed to maintain facility order and resolution of grievances
- Maintaining a high level of professional training, including annual CPR recertification
- Assisting medical staff as trained liaisons in identifying special medical or mental health needs, or the needs of military veterans
- Supervising inmate labor





OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

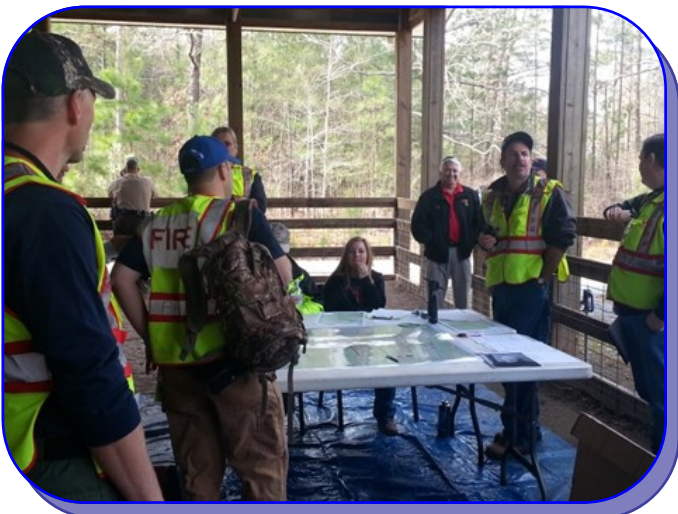
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY JULY 2013 – JUNE 2014



The Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is the local community-based equivalent of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency at the state level and the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the federal level. Oconee County EMA works closely with these agencies (as well as dozens of others, both public and private) before, during, and after emergencies and disasters.

The Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for assisting in the protection of lives and property of Oconee County citizens in the event of natural or man-made disasters. Emergency Management anticipates emergencies, takes steps to prevent loss of life and property, and provides quick response when havoc strikes.

In the past year, three separate major weather events necessitated EMA response. Two ice storms and one windstorm required coordinated response of EMA and other county agencies. The Emergency Operations Center was partially activated during each of these events. In addition to responding to these real life emergencies, EMA conducted a training exercise at Heritage Park involving a search and rescue of lost/injured individuals. The drill included EMA, Fire Rescue, Sheriff's Office, 911 Center, Parks and Recreation, Information Technology – GIS, DNR and National EMS.





OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE



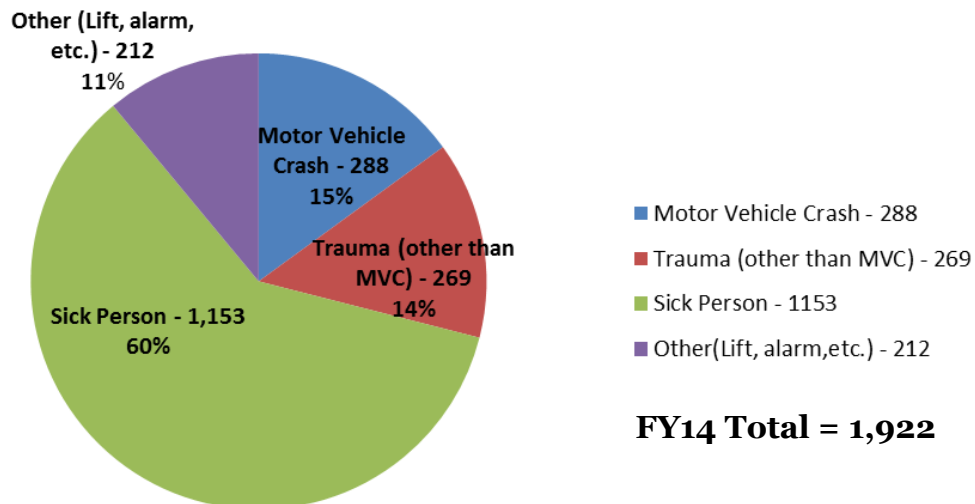
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES JULY 2013 – JUNE 2014

Oconee County Fire Rescue provides Emergency Medical Responder services to the citizens of the county with seven rescue trucks and one mass casualty truck. These services are provided by 101 volunteer medically-trained fire rescue personnel with an average response time of 6.9 minutes. National EMS, Inc., provides Advanced Life Support Transport Services in Oconee County through a contract with Athens Regional Medical Center and St. Mary's Healthcare System. In September 2014, Oconee County Fire Rescue will begin another Emergency Medical Responder class and certify additional volunteers to respond to medical emergencies in the community.

101 Oconee County Medically-Trained Fire Rescue Personnel

- 67 First Responders – over 110 hours training
- 32 EMTs – over 400 hours training
- 2 Paramedics – over 1000 hours training

Total Emergency Medical Responses July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014





OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

FIRE DEPARTMENT JULY 2013 – JUNE 2014

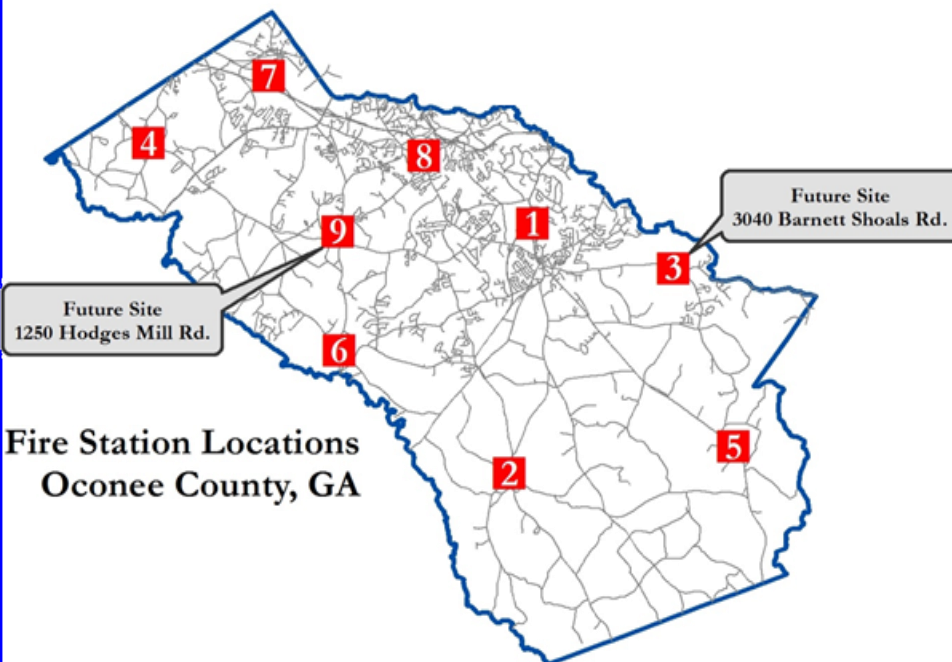


Oconee Fire Rescue (OCFR) is responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing the fire prevention and suppression activities of seven volunteer fire stations in Oconee County. These seven fire stations are staffed with 170 volunteer firefighters and medical responders with an average response time of 7.2 minutes.

OCFR is also responsible for responding to all structure fires in Oconee County and other applicable calls; keeping updated records for ISO (Insurance Services Organization) and working to achieve the best ISO rating; coordinating joint training for all stations; providing fire safety classes for schools and daycare centers; working with local and state agencies on arson investigations; recruiting new volunteer firefighters and medical responders; and coordinating volunteer firefighter and medical training.

170 Oconee County Fire Rescue Personnel - Certifications:

- **110 - National Certified Firefighters**
- **29 - State Certified Firefighters**
- **4 - Registered for Firefighter 1 Training**
- **101 - First Responder or EMT Certified**
- **144 - Hazardous Material Certified**
- **129 - Vehicle Extrication Certified**

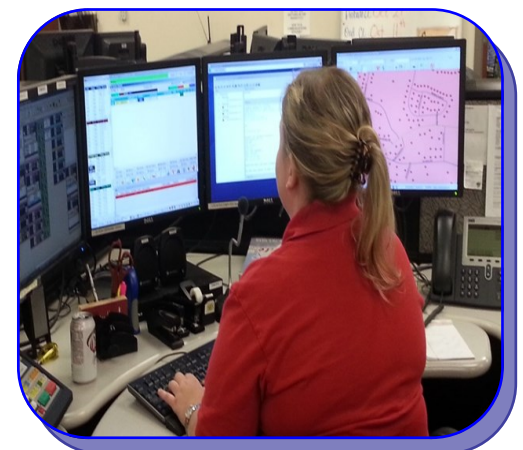


Total Fire Rescue Responses

(By Calendar Year)

| | |
|-----------|------------------|
| 2002: 739 | 2008: 801 |
| 2003: 684 | 2009: 747 |
| 2004: 795 | 2010: 814 |
| 2005: 750 | 2011: 764 |
| 2006: 787 | 2012: 730 |
| 2007: 903 | 2013: 666 |

- Station 1.)** Watkinsville - 7580 Macon Hwy., Watkinsville
Station 2.) South Oconee Station - 2590 Old Farmington Rd., Farmington
Station 4.) Dark Corner - 7620 Hog Mountain Rd., Statham
Station 5.) East Oconee - 4931 Greensboro Hwy., Watkinsville
Station 6.) N. High Shoals - 200 Hillsboro Rd., N. High Shoals
Station 7.) N. Oconee - 1931 McNutt Creek Rd., Bogart
Station 8.) Barber Creek - 1050 Oconee Conn., Watkinsville





OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE



Oconee County ISO Class 5/5X Fire Rating

OCFR is evaluated by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) every five years. Oconee County has an ISO Class 5/5X rating by maintaining excellent fire apparatuses, equipment, and well-trained volunteer firefighters along with outstanding 911 communications and water supply. **OCFR is the only county-wide all-volunteer fire service that has an ISO Class 5/5X fire rating in Georgia.**

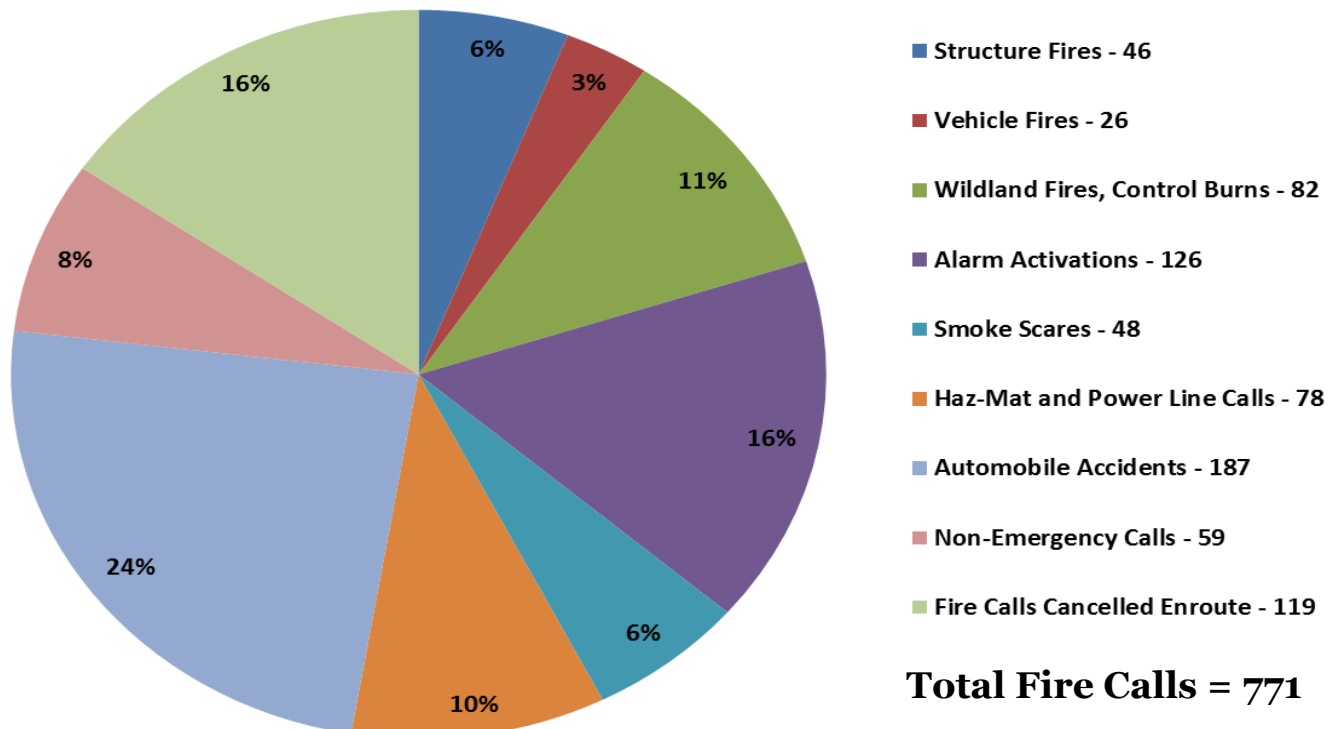


2013 Fire Prevention Program at Oconee County Schools, Grades K-3



**Burn Foundation Boot Drive
#1 Fundraising Volunteer Department in Georgia**

Total Fire Rescue Responses July 2013 - June 2014



OCONEE COUNTY LIBRARIES

The Oconee County Library and Bogart Public Library are funded by four local agencies: Oconee County Board of Commissioners, Oconee County School District, City of Watkinsville, and City of Bogart.

Oconee County Libraries By The Numbers:

| Fiscal Year | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| # Visitors (Door Count) | 241,524 | 231,213 | 229,977 |
| # Checkouts | 256,635 | 253,097 | 266,104 |
| # Children's Programs Offered | 364 | 320 | 497 |
| # Children Attending Programs | 17,117 | 16,258 | 18,538 |
| # Children in Summer Reading Program | 1,885 | 2,063 | 1,749 |
| # Reference Questions Answered | 84,668 | 77,626 | 96,725 |
| # Meetings Booked in Public Meeting Rooms | 485 | 491 | 440 |
| # Computer Sessions Used | 56,084 | 52,497 | 133,478 |
| # New Library Cards Issued | 1,233 | 1,060 | 1,103 |
| Total Expenditures | \$413,157 | \$408,163 | \$436,175 |
| # Employees (FTE) | 9.8 | 9.8 | 9.8 |
| # Registered Borrowers | 18,492 | 14,805 | 15,908 |

FY13-FY14 Comparisons:

The Oconee County libraries have seen a dramatic increase in the usage of digital readers over the past fiscal year. E-book usage was up 25% in Watkinsville and 60% in Bogart from FY13. Additionally, audio book circulation increased by 42% in Watkinsville and nearly 50% in Bogart. Both libraries continue to see WiFi usage increase, up 10% from FY13 and approximately 46% from FY12. During FY14, patrons borrowed and returned 47,343 items from PINES libraries outside Oconee County.

FY14 Highlights:

Rhea Hebert was named Library Manager on June 16, 2014, following the retirement of Jackie Elsner. Hebert comes to Oconee County from Elizabethtown, North Carolina, where she spent 11 years as director of the Bladen County Public Library.

Currently, plans are currently underway to add a 5,000 square-foot expansion to the Bogart Library. The project is expected to be authorized in FY15.

New programs were instituted for young adults of Oconee County during FY14. Close to 1,350 young adults between the ages of 12 and 19 years-old took part in the 88 programs offered by the Oconee County Library.

Friends of Oconee County Library donated over **\$34,000** in proceeds from book sales and donations to the Oconee County Library to be used for materials!



PARKS & RECREATION

LIVE ACTIVE



Our health, our community, our economy and our environment all benefit from investments in parks and recreation opportunities. Our parks are such a stable influence on our lives that we tend not to give them much thought. But, effective parks and recreation facilities do not just happen on their own. They require professional care and financial support to keep them clean, safe, and programmed suitably for the community they serve. Our park facilities and recreational programs are vital for healthy living, equating to a higher quality of life.

FY14 By the Numbers

- Over 5,500 annual program participants
- Over 14,000 special programs and community event attendees
- Over 40,000 annual day trips to the fitness center, open gym and indoor track
- Over 4,300 active fitness memberships
- Over 464 facility and field rentals
- Countless passive park users walking, running, horseback riding, picnics, tennis, biking, bark park, playgrounds and event spectators are in the parks daily



Parks

- **Oconee Veterans Park** is a 196-acre park with a community center (4 meeting rooms, gymnasium, fitness center, and indoor walking track), four youth softball/baseball fields, four soccer fields, eight tennis courts, playground, walking trail, picnic shelters, and a “Bark Park” for pet owners.
- **Herman C. Michael Park** is located directly across from OVP and has a gymnasium, multi-use field, three softball fields, six tennis courts, walking trails, picnic shelter, playground, and an 18-hole disc golf course known by locals as “the Herm”.
- The **Bogart Sports Complex** offers six lighted baseball and multipurpose fields, walking trail, two playgrounds, and a picnic shelter across 37 acres of land.
- **Heritage Park** offers a large open arena, feeder barn, features ten miles of bike trails and four miles of equestrian trails and over 364 acres of natural resources!

Programs

- Average of 2,100 people use the fitness area per month
- Average of 1,300 people using the indoor walking track and open gymnasium per month
- Over 1,100 fall participants in Tackle Football, Flag Football, Soccer, Volleyball and Cheerleading
- Over 745 youth and adults participated in winter basketball programs
- Over 900 enrolled in spring soccer
- Over 200 participants in spring Homeschool PE, Volleyball, Start Smart and Yoga
- Over 350 adults participants on 23 teams in the spring Adult Softball season
- Average of 185 participants in After School Program for the 2013-2014 school year
- Max capacity of 180 participants in Summer Day Camp
- Over 560 participants in over 23 Summer Sports Camps
- Over 1,628 user group participants using park facilities
- Over 10 year community partnership with the National Alliance for Youth Sports





PARKS & RECREATION LIVE ACTIVE



Special Events & Tournaments

- Oconee 4th of July Spectacular
- Movie in the Park
- Touch-a-Truck
- 5K and Cross Country Races
- Mountain Bike Races
- Softball/Baseball Tournaments
- Soccer Tournament
- Table Tennis Tournament
- Tennis Tournaments
- Cole Bros. Circus
- Pitch, Hit and Run
- Punt, Pass and Kick
- Coaches vs. Cancer 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament
- 4-H and FFA Events
- Annual Southern Force Fast Pitch Softball Showcase



Oconee 4th of July Spectacular at OVP



★ **Events and tournaments held at county park and recreation facilities bring in an estimated \$500,000 in economic impact for Oconee County each year!**

Volunteers

OPCRD appreciates the many volunteer coaches who work with our programs throughout the year. It is estimated over **13,000 volunteer hours** have been donated by our coaches since fall 2013. The recorded value per hour of a volunteer is **\$22.14** which totals over **\$290,565** the county has saved by having great volunteers!

- 142 volunteer coaches donated 4,686 hours of service to fall youth programs
- 80 volunteer coaches donated 2,960 hours of service to winter programs
- 41 swim coaches donated 1,353 hours of service this summer

Park Improvements

Several projects were completed during FY14 with the help of civic organizations, businesses, and recreational leagues. Notable improvements that were made to the county's parks facilities included:

- OVP tennis courts re-coated
- OVP youth baseball/softball safety netting system installed
- OVP and HCM park beautification work day coordinated with Caterpillar
- OVP added four batting cages, donated and installed by park user group Oconee Little League, Inc.
- OVP Little Free Library installed by Nathan Iyer as an Eagle Scout project
- HCM gymnasium HVAC replaced
- HP equestrian trail maintenance work day by Boy Scout Troop 537



Caterpillar Work Day

Georgia Recreation and Parks Association Awards

- 2013 GRPA District 7 Agency of the Year
- 2013 GRPA District 7 Programmer of the Year – Jessica Tiller
- 2013 GRPA State Distinguished Administrative Support Staff – Janine Lynn

SENIOR CENTER

The Senior Center offers some of the best opportunities for seniors within the community to meet new friends, socialize, renew friendships, and participate in fun activities. As an active living center, there are numerous recreational opportunities such as horseshoes, a pool room, Bridge Clubs and Mahjongg, as well as health and wellness screenings and outdoor walking trails within the park. In addition, the Senior Center offers educational/instructional classes such as Beginning Computer, Ballroom and Line Dancing, Zumba Fitness, and Chair Aerobics.

The Senior Center promotes the well-being of its guests by providing entertainment throughout the year in the form of musical programs, seasonal parties and dances, and various community events. Community partnerships with local businesses are a vital part of the Senior Center's operation as they provide volunteer services or funding for special events, parties, and fundraisers.

Outside of promoting a healthy lifestyle through active living and community involvement, the Senior Center provides a nutritional lunch daily Monday through Friday. During FY14, the Center provided 15,737 meals to area participants and logged 33,798 miles transporting participants. Three full-time and six part-time employees work over 300 hours/week planning, promoting, and providing services and programs to 200 area seniors and countless visitors and vendors.

FY14 Programs and Activities

Consumer Programs

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| AARP- CarFit | Lion's Club- Eye Screenings | University of Georgia School of Law- Elder Care Clinic |
| Energy Assistance | Oconee Co. Fire Dept. - Fire Safety | University of Georgia/Red Cross Disaster Preparedness |
| Georgia Telecommunication for Hearing Impaired | Oconee County Sheriff's Dept.- Fraud & Safety Awareness | NE Georgia Regional Commission - Area Agency on Aging Services |

Participant Volunteer Projects

Volunteer projects conducted during FY14 included: *Holiday Can-a-thon; "Fill-A-Pan" Thanksgiving Project; Collecting Pet Food, Toys, Bedding, and Litter for Oconee County Animal Control; and Action, Inc. – Inter-Generational Food Box Painting Project.*



PROPERTY APPRAISAL

The Property Appraisal Office has a difficult charge as it must determine the fair market value of all property within the county. Under state law, the tax digest must mirror the sales data very closely. To that end, the Georgia Department of Revenue does an audit of all counties in the state to determine if their assessments are consistent with sales. Oconee County's latest sales ratio was 38.9%. The state requires that counties target a 40% ratio, with a +/- 2% margin of error allowed.

New construction activity picked up significantly around the county as evidenced by the 215 new home sales during FY14, up 159% from the previous fiscal year. The average sale price for new homes increased over the previous year for the first time since 2007. The housing market continues to follow an upward trend that started last year. New and existing home sales during FY14 increased by 44%.

| Historical Trends for Improved Residential Sales | | | | | Weighted Averages | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| New Construction | | | Existing Construction | | New & Existing Construction | |
| Year | # of Sales | Average \$/ Sale | # of Sales | Average \$/ Sale | # of Sales | Average \$/ Sale |
| 2002 | 203 | \$260,779.00 | 346 | \$209,146.00 | 549 | \$228,237.98 |
| 2003 | 263 | \$274,926.00 | 361 | \$208,915.00 | 624 | \$236,736.94 |
| 2004 | 203 | \$330,198.00 | 330 | \$229,337.00 | 533 | \$258,068.00 |
| 2005 | 263 | \$315,062.00 | 427 | \$255,861.00 | 690 | \$278,426.00 |
| 2006 | 243 | \$355,517.00 | 458 | \$266,158.00 | 701 | \$297,134.00 |
| 2007 | 199 | \$382,152.00 | 350 | \$255,770.00 | 549 | \$301,581.00 |
| 2008 | 137 | \$370,452.00 | 207 | \$269,004.00 | 344 | \$309,406.00 |
| 2009 | 36 | \$361,717.00 | 239 | \$265,079.00 | 275 | \$277,729.00 |
| 2010 | 31 | \$329,122.00 | 207 | \$258,356.00 | 238 | \$267,574.00 |
| 2011 | 57 | \$300,998.00 | 179 | \$275,279.00 | 236 | \$281,491.00 |
| 2012 | 83 | \$281,176.00 | 296 | \$239,913.00 | 379 | \$248,949.00 |
| 2013 | 215 | \$304,475.00 | 331 | \$265,428.00 | 546 | \$280,804.00 |
| *These values were compiled from Fair Market Value sales only. 2013 sales are through 12/31/2013. New sales include 2012 and 2013 year built. Custom built homes not sold on the open market are not included. | | | | | | |

In FY14, there were 322 appeals filed where property owners contested the assessment of their property's fair market value.

TAX COMMISSIONER

The Tax Commissioner's Office deals with motor vehicles, real and personal property tax, homestead exemptions, registration and taxation of mobile homes, heavy duty equipment tax, and timber tax. There are always changes and unique situations that come about with each of these areas. The staff in the Tax Commissioner's Office is charged with keeping current with the many laws, rules and regulations, and policies that must be followed in order to ensure accuracy and efficiency. Their primary responsibilities include handling inquiries from current and prospective residents, collecting Title Ad Valorem Tax for vehicles, and contacting insurance companies about electronically submitting vehicle insurance data to the Georgia Electronic Insurance Compliance System (GEICS).

During FY14, the Tax Commissioner's Office implemented online registration renewals in order to expedite the renewal process and to make it more convenient for county taxpayers. Since that time there have been 646 renewals, totaling \$58,000. These renewals are processed through the Department of Revenue's website with Official Payments, and then sent to office staff where decals are printed and mailed to citizens. The convenience fees to process vehicle registrations online are 2.35% with a minimum of \$1.00 for credit/debit cards and \$1.95 for electronic checks.

Another technological improvement made in the office was the installation of new property tax software through Thomson Reuters called VCS Tax. This program will make the property tax digest creation, property tax collection, and accounting of property taxes much more efficient. The software upgrade to the Tax Commissioner's website (oconeecountytax.com) will now allow for updated payment information every 20 minutes as opposed to updating overnight. The website is now more mobile friendly as the office recently implemented QR codes on the property tax bills for easier and convenient online pay.

The Tax Commissioner's office is located in the Oconee County Courthouse at 23 N. Main St, Room 105 in downtown Watkinsville. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 am-5:00 pm for property tax and 8:00 am-4:30 pm for motor vehicles.

| TAX COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE DATA- FY14 | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Tag Registrations Issued | 34,130 |
| Ad Valorem collected for Vehicles for County purposes | \$1,940,227 |
| Ad Valorem collected for Vehicles for School purposes | \$2,615,132 |
| Property Tax Parcels for tax year 2013 | 17,596 |
| Property Tax collected for County purposes - Current Year <i>(Property tax includes: mobile homes, timber, public utilities, not on digest)</i> | \$8,638,522 |
| Property Tax collected for County purposes - Prior Years <i>(Prior years tax consists of tax collected in 2012 and prior years.)</i> | \$113,307 |
| Property Tax collected for School purposes - Current Year | \$22,272,798 |
| Property Tax collected for School Purposes - Prior Years <i>(Prior years tax consists of tax collected in 2012 and prior years.)</i> | \$305,080 |

ANIMAL CONTROL

Animal Control is taking a different approach for this year's *Year in Review*. Rather than supply a table of statistics and figures to the community, the focus will be on the public services Animal Control provides through volunteer opportunities and exciting new initiatives. To begin, there were 2,156 visitors (surrenders, impounds, adoptions, or community service workers) to the Animal Shelter during FY14. Vital to the success of the Animal Shelter were the 254 volunteers who came to help walk, clean, play, and feed the animals. Animal Control staff would like to thank these extraordinary volunteers for their time and service helping these animals during FY14.



The Animal Shelter launched two new programs during FY14: *Foster Friends of Oconee County Animal Shelter* and *Friends of Oconee County Animal Control*. Both were created to help save more animals within the county.

A "Foster Friends" volunteer will physically remove the animal from the shelter and place it in his/her home for a specified amount of time, attend at least one event each month to showcase the pet, and make sure the dog wears its "Adopt Me" vest during public outings.

Friends of Oconee County Animal Control are strictly volunteering their time by one or more combinations: coming to the shelter to interact with animals, helping with events, marketing through word-of-mouth, posting multi-media via Facebook and the Oconee County website, finding new vendors willing to host an event, and picking up donations around the county. Helping is only limited to your imagination, so any ideas that may lead to a successful program can be brought to Animal Control staff.

The programs offered by Animal Control have taken off and provided a positive outcome for the county's unwanted animals. The staff is confident that FY15 will surpass all expectations as a result of these projects coming to fruition. Please visit Facebook and "Like" *Foster Friends of Oconee County Animal Shelter* and *Friends of Oconee County Animal Control* and keep up to date with events and animal updates. Both pages have the link for "Whiskerers", a weekly email newsletter written and distributed by volunteers.

There are a number of helpful FAQ on our page: <http://www.oconeecounty.com/index.php/departments/animal-control>.



CIVIC CENTER

The mission of the Oconee County Civic Center is to provide high quality meeting and performance space for a variety of public, private and school system related functions. The Civic Center seeks to provide full-service meeting, conference, recreational and cultural arts facilities. Use of the Civic Center is available to groups and individuals within and outside the county. By agreement with the Oconee County Board of Education, school events have scheduling priority.

FY14 Statistics

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Total Rents and Royalties | \$103,455 |
| Total Expenditures | \$345,869 |
| Total Income | \$161,079 |
| Total Events | 402 |
| School System Events | 178 |
| County Sponsored Events | 81 |
| All Other Events | 143 |



FY14 Summary:

The Civic Center hosted over 400 events for the third consecutive fiscal year. Notable events and shows that took place during FY14 included “*The Little Mermaid*” and “*Shrek*” produced by the Oconee Youth Playhouse, Zaxby’s “State of the Brand” meeting, Cornerstone Productions’ “*Hello Dolly*”, an agriculture conference that focused on hay production and poultry ventilation, and the Friends of the Oconee Library book sale. In addition, the Civic Center provided production services for many events held at different venues within the county, including the Veteran’s Celebrations at OCMS and Oconee Veterans’ Park, the Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting in downtown Watkinsville, and OCAF’s 20th Anniversary.

New Initiatives:

The Civic Center Renovation Project is part of the approved 2015 SPLOST. Therefore, if the voters approve the SPLOST this November, \$1.5 million will be allocated from the SPLOST collections to build additional dressing rooms and renovate the Civic Center. Of that \$1.5 million, approximately \$1 million will go towards installing more efficient lighting and HVAC systems, along with other interior improvements.

| | FY10 | FY11 | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| # School System Events Hosted | 210 | 171 | 201 | 188 | 178 |
| # County Government Events Hosted | 51 | 83 | 89 | 80 | 81 |
| # Private Events Hosted | 138 | 140 | 143 | 145 | 143 |
| # Total Events Hosted | 399 | 394 | 433 | 413 | 402 |

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The Oconee County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent develops educational programs and responds to private citizens and commercial agri-businesses for problem solving and diagnosis purposes. During FY14 Oconee County Cooperative Extension:

- Submitted 500 soil, water, forage and microbiological specimens to UGA for laboratory analysis
- Diagnosed 400 plant diseases and insect damage samples
- Provided a regular column on issues facing homeowners and farmers for *The Oconee Enterprise*
- Served as an educational programming resource for the Clarke/Oconee Cattlemen's Association and the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee
- Provided recertification training for 105 private and commercial pesticide applicator
- Provided numerous educational awareness programming for schools and community events
- Successfully raised money to fund agricultural exhibits and educational programming



Oconee County 4-H educates more than 700 youth. During the 2013-2014 4-H year:

- Three members won a state championship and were named Master 4-Hers
- Two members served on and one member was elected to the Northeast District 4-H Board of Directors
- Ten were selected as 4-H camp counselors
- The 2013 Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging Team won first place in the district contest
- Two members performed and one member was selected to perform with Clovers and Company, the Georgia 4-H statewide performing group
- 394 contacts were made through Project Achievement and Judging Events
- 205 attended Georgia 4-H educational camps and conferences
- 85 members attended State 4-H competitions and conferences
- 22 youth graduated from the Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS)
- Over 190 members participated in activities to benefit the community
- Over \$9,000 in 4-H and community scholarships were awarded to graduating high school seniors
- 172 members served in leadership roles during monthly meetings
- Over \$12,000 was raised through the "Oconee 4-H: Endless Possibilities" Fundraiser

The Family and Consumer Sciences Program provided 40 nutrition and wellness programs, including Cancer Prevention Cooking Schools, Walk-a-Weigh Health and Fitness, and Power to Prevent Diabetes. A total of 609 participants were assisted in making healthier food choices and increasing daily physical activity. These practices lead to a healthier body and weight control and helps our community by reducing healthcare costs over the participant's lifetime. **The Family and Consumer Sciences Program** provided 25 food safety and home food preservation programs, teaching 387 participants safe food preparation and home food preservation practices. These programs help ensure an abundant and safe food supply, which will lead to reduced incidence of foodborne illness in the home.



HUMAN RESOURCES

Oconee County employs individuals in many different capacities in order to provide the services demanded by the residents of Oconee County. Employees are classified into eight categories identifying their roles and reporting requirements. These categories are shown below.

| | As of 6/30/2014 |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Full-Time | 227 |
| Part-Time | 37 |
| Seasonal | 37 |
| Elected Officials | 10 |
| Enterprise Fund (Utility Department) | 25 |
| Reimbursed to County | 9 |
| Board Members (Elections & Assessors) | 9 |
| Bailiffs | 3 |
| Total Employment | 357 |

E-Verify

The E-Verify Employment Eligibility Verification Program (EEV) involves checks of the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) databases, using an automated system to verify the employment authorization of all newly hired employees, regardless of citizenship, after completion of the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9). Oconee County has been complying with E-Verify since August 2007.

Oconee County's E-Verify Identification Number for the Employee Eligibility Verification Program is **#50742**.

Did You Know

Did you know that you could go to www.oconeecounty.com and view the current job listing for employment with Oconee County Board of Commissioners? On the homepage click on Job Openings. From the listing, you can view the job description for the position that you might be interested in. The employment application is fillable online, but you must print your completed application. You are not able to save your work. Submit your application to the Human Resources Office-Courthouse, Room 203 or mail in your completed application to:

Oconee County Board of Commissioners
Attn: Human Resources
PO Box 145
Watkinsville, GA 30677

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

The **Information Technology (I.T.) Department** is responsible for maintaining innovative, cost-effective solutions for all county departments, providing quality technical support and protecting the County's infrastructure from cyber threats in order to meet countywide business goals. During FY14, the IT Department:

- ♦ Implemented a change in service providers for a significant savings to the County.
- ♦ Forecast technology needs and budgeted maintenance/upgrades for all county departments and facilities regarding software, hardware, and telecommunications.
- ♦ Provided support, assistance, and implementation for the Tax Commissioner's Office during upgrades to software and hardware.
- ♦ Managed installation of fiber optic systems for continued efficiency of our telecommunications/technology systems.
- ♦ Provided training for county employees on an as-needed basis.
- ♦ Utilized current software to implement a reservation system for county vehicles. No additional software was needed.
- ♦ Provided technology support for the Board of Elections and posted results immediately as available.
- ♦ Provide monitoring to prevent cyber threats of email accounts and the County website.
- ♦ Responsible for attending/recording Board of Commissioner meetings.
- ♦ Provides educational opportunities for school groups.

The **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Office** is utilized through various opportunities and requests. The technology available in our GIS Office provides valuable resources and teaching opportunities. From maps designed for the Sheriff's Office to teaching 3rd graders during a Courthouse field trip, our GIS Office personnel have the skill and technology to produce a variety of maps and overlays. Following is a sampling of the completed requests during FY14:

- ♦ Work with Sheriff's Office to build series of missing person manhunt maps
- ♦ Work with Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to update Watkinsville Cemetery boundary map for land acquisition
- ♦ Create data and maps for fiber optic cable ownership, location and distances within the county
- ♦ Build fire station location concept maps for Barnett Shoals Rd. & Mars Hill Rd. areas (9 layouts)
- ♦ Re-create Alcohol Service Area Maps
- ♦ Create Utilities Map Books for hydrants and waterlines (52 maps total)
- ♦ Structure placement and rotation (12,000+ unique structures) and missing feature analysis (1,397+ features identified for further review)
- ♦ Recycling center planting maps for Long Range Planning
- ♦ Create and maintain parcel layer (266 parcel additions), land cover and soils layer
- ♦ Work with Sheriff's Office to create alternate route maps for 4th of July at Oconee Veterans Park
- ♦ Assist Public Works GPS storm water outfalls in new urbanized area
- ♦ Create 25+ unique maps for Economic Development Department
- ♦ Create wiring diagram maps for Animal Shelter, Courthouse, and Annex
- ♦ Supplied GIS support for 16 internal users
- ♦ Created county-wide zoning map
- ♦ Created Hard Labor & Bear Creek Reservoirs aerial maps
- ♦ Maintain and update zoning layer
- ♦ WinGap support for all departments outside of Property Appraisal. Revise, update and print Tax Atlas maps (45 unique maps)

OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES

The Operations and Facilities Department is entrusted with the task of maintaining the Board of Commissioner's buildings and grounds, with a specialized focus on service, integrity, teamwork and excellence. The services include: maintaining and securing all properties, performing routine maintenance repairs, cleaning buildings, and providing preventative maintenance when necessary. Overall, this task includes roughly 80 buildings totaling over 300,000 gross square feet.

Operations and Facilities also provides Courthouse Security Screening for normal Courthouse operations and after-hours meetings. In addition, staff is tasked with responding to approximately 1,000 work orders annually and responsible for an annual operating budget of \$1.2 million. The workload is maintained and completed by the combined efforts of 19 full-time and part-time employees.

Upcoming Opportunities and Challenges:

Operations and Facilities requested \$2 million over the term of the 2015 SPLOST period for building updates county wide. The updates will include, but not limited to, the replacement or upgrades to HVAC equipment and lighting. Renovation and expansion of the Bogart Library will be in the approval and planning stage during FY15. This will be a joint venture with the Georgia Public Library Service and the Oconee County Board of Commissioners.

Due to the need for a more secure judicial facility, planning is underway for potential changes to the Oconee County Courthouse. Operations and Facilities supports the courthouse with custodial and facility related services. As courthouse maintenance and operating expenses are funded within their departmental budget, Operations and Facilities will be involved with future changes implemented.



PLANNING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Planning Division:

The Planning and Code Enforcement Department serves the public through its diverse duties in a committed and professional manner. Training and education is a vital component of professional development. Staff from both divisions have been cross-trained in multiple areas of expertise in order to better serve the present and future needs of the public and to provide flexibility and efficiency within the department. The mission of the Planning Department is to assist the Board of Commissioners in planning orderly growth and development, insuring that development guidelines and regulations are followed in the establishment of subdivisions, commercial developments and zoning areas.

FY14 Summary

During FY14, the Planning staff responded to 4,480 telephone calls and provided assistance to 1,044 customers in the office to discuss land uses, zoning of properties, administrative subdivision plats, proposed development projects, and requirements of the Oconee County Unified Development Code.

After a year-long working and discussion period between staff and the Board of Commissioners, amendments to the Unified Development Code were adopted. The amendments established 1) the new land use for Religious Retreats, 2) allowed for administrative approval of one division of property on an unpaved road, and 3) established greater flexibility for the use of guesthouses. The Unified Development Code is frequently reviewed and scrutinized for conflicts that may require changes by the Board of Commissioners.

The Development Review Committee (DRC) undertook a significant project during FY14 to streamline staff's access old data. The DRC clerk began the process of inputting data into the master relational database for zoning and developments, which has been collected from seven different source/reference books. Rezoning and development data is complete from 1990 to present. Data is currently being added for pre-1990 developments as files are retrieved from archives on an as-needed basis. Final plat data entry has been added and is now up-to-date, with many of the rezoning resolutions available in PDF.

As development at the Epps Bridge Centre ramped up during FY14, the plan review staff and inspections staff worked closely with the developer of this 486,000 square foot shopping center as the project moved from its initial stage of development to the "out parcel" phase of development. Still a work-in-progress, the Epps Bridge Centre is the largest planned retail center in Oconee County, with additional retailers opening up or relocating to the area at the close of FY14.

Department staff members served as members of the Emergency Operations Center Team. As members of the Committee to Revise Emergency Hazard Mitigation Plan, staff provided up-to-date information on development and construction, including proposed developments that may affect the future delivery of emergency services. Additionally, the department maintained compliance with the National Incident Management System requirements in order to ensure that the proper policies and procedures were in place.

Part of the Planning staff's routine duties throughout FY14 included providing services, in accordance with the Service Delivery Strategy and intergovernmental agreements, for the municipalities of Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals, and Watkinsville. Additionally, department staff worked at length with real estate appraisers, banks, and design consultants to verify the stage of construction or completion of dormant project that are being revived. In this role, the Planning staff acts as the DRC facilitator by processing applications, routing them for review, documenting transactions, and conducting monthly DRC meetings with departmental reviewers and local developers.

PLANNING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code Enforcement Division:

The Code Enforcement Division promotes public safety and protects property rights by regulating and controlling the design, construction, occupancy, use, and location of facilities within the unincorporated Oconee County. This is accomplished through the enforcement of construction codes, zoning laws, state and local litter laws, environmental laws, soil erosion ordinances, and other ordinances passed by the Oconee County Board of Commissioners.

Code Enforcement staff issues all commercial and residential building permits, including plumbing, electrical, HVAC, gas, logging, signs, driveway, soil erosion, house moving, parade, road race, solicitation, swimming pool, mobile home, solid waste hauling, canvassing, and underground utilities.

Staff reviews commercial and residential building plans, site plans, preliminary plats, and final plats. The Fire Marshal reviews all commercial plans and inspects commercial and residential construction for compliance with all fire codes, egress, capacity, and handicap accessibility. Additionally, Code Enforcement staff is responsible for all new building and house numbers for addresses.

Last year's restructure designated three employees to specific roles as in-house experts in signage, commercial building inspections, and residential building inspections. The building community is now able to ask for a specific staff member when questions arise on the various types of building inspections and permitting. The Fire Marshal attended the annual Georgia Fire Safety Symposium and was re-deputized as the Local Fire Marshal. During FY14, he completed the following re-certifications: ICC Fire Inspector, ICC Residential Inspector, and ICC Building Inspector.

The chart below presents the number and type of permits issued by Code Enforcement during FY14 and the total value associated with each category.

| Permit Type | Number Issued | Total Value |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Single Family Residential Building | 305 | \$220,790.53 |
| Townhomes | 190 | \$88,965.60 |
| Commercial Building | 100 | \$109,836.14 |
| Mobile Home | 9 | \$1,784.87 |
| Miscellaneous | 280 | \$25,528.06 |
| Sign Permits | 96 | — |
| Logging and Hauling | 21 | — |

PLANNING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Building Inspections and Licensing:

Building inspectors conducted 2,935 residential and 424 commercial building inspections. Since FY10, single family building permits have increased from 68 to 305 while commercial permits have increased from 38 to 100 during that span. Additionally, staff conducted 1,145 inspections for soil erosion and responded to 38 erosion and sediment complaints with 12 violations and no "Stop Work Orders" issued. Code Enforcement officers processed 239 complaints, with 13 non-compliance orders. Only six citations were issued for code violations, but most non-compliance issues were resolved prior to citations being necessary.

The department is also responsible for registering and collecting occupation tax certificates, including compiling annual reports to the Georgia Department of Revenue. During FY14, 185 new and 1,054 renewals of occupational tax certificates were processed. The combined value of these certificates was \$112,557.66. The number of tax certificates processed tends to hover around 1,200 annually.

Data

The following chart illustrates the number of employees in Planning and Code Enforcement and each level of training or certification. By the end of FY15, the entire department will see two staffers certified in Floodplain Management with two additional certifications in building inspections.

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| College Associate's Degree | 2 | Notary Public | 2 |
| College Bachelor's Degree | 5 | Certified Code Enforcement Officer | 3 |
| College Master's Degree | 2 | Certified Professional Secretary | 1 |
| Professional Affiliations/Memberships | 8 | Microsoft Office Word/Access | 3 |
| National Incident Management System | 6 | FEMA Damage Assessment | 1 |
| Soil Erosion Certification | 6 | Commercial Plumbing Inspector | 1 |
| Building Inspector | 3 | CPR/AED | 2 |
| Fire Marshal /Fire Inspector | 1 | | |

The chart below presents the number and type of code-driven processes of standard review and approvals conducted by the department within the fiscal year.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accepted for Planning Commission: | 14 rezones; 7 special use |
| Accepted for Development Review Committee (DRC): | 22 preliminary plat/site plans; 22 site development plans; 2 revised final plats |
| Accepted for Review and Processing or Administrative Approval: | 93 administrative plats; 22 final plats; 18 sign application reviews with code enforcement; 11 cell tower reviews |
| Accepted for BOC: | 25 variances |

TOURISM

The Oconee County Welcome Center is located at 21 North Main Street in beautiful downtown Watkinsville, next to the Courthouse. The Oconee County Tourism Department welcomes thousands of visitors every year. Its goal is to encourage people to visit Oconee County and spend time exploring the many wonderful treasures the community has to offer. The Tourism Department strives to increase attendance at local events, encourage dining at local restaurants, and book hotel/B & B overnight stays.

New Hire:

The Tourism Department welcomed Alex Perschka as the new Assistant Director of Tourism. He is replacing Justin Martin who relocated to Charlotte, NC and is now the Tourism & Convention Marketing Manager for Visit Charlotte. Alex is a native of Oconee County and spent the past few years in Orlando, FL where he earned his degree in Hospitality Management from the University of Central Florida. Alex and his wife Jessica have two boys, Avery (5) and Cooper (1).



Alex is responsible for keeping the Tourism Department connected and current through various social media outlets, maintaining the website, assisting visitors at the Welcome Center, and will assist the Tourism Director with identifying new ideas to reach travelers and increase visits to Oconee County.

New Brochure:

The Tourism Department redesigned the *Oconee County Visitor's Guide* brochure. The new brochure, the first multipage brochure in the county's history, highlights some of the attractions, events, restaurants, and shops that make Oconee County a great place to visit and explore. The project took several months for the design process, formatting, and final product to be delivered. The final brochure was received the last week in June. The brochures were shipped to eleven major Georgia Visitors Information Centers, as well as all visitors' centers in Georgia.

Website/Social Media:

In FY14, The Tourism Department continued to see increased activity on the tourism website (www.VisitOconee.com) as well as the other social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube). These online sources encourage people to visit Oconee County and increase attendance to events, restaurants, and hotel/B&B overnight stays. Social media is the fastest growing marketing trend towards attracting people to events in and around the area. With the internet at our finger tips, it's increasingly important for the Tourism Department to stay current with our marketing efforts, and as a result, our social media efforts are ongoing.



New Visitor's Guide Brochures



First Friday at Ashford on Main

TOURISM

Educational Activities at Eagle Tavern:

The Tourism Department continued to host a large number of local students on field trips at the Eagle Tavern. With the help of volunteers who dedicate many hours of their own time, students are educated with fun ideas that meet the required scope/standards at each grade level. In addition to groups during the school year, we hosted children and their parents for activities during the summer months. These tours and activities are thoroughly enjoyed by children, parents, and educators.



Community Involvement:

The Tourism Department continues to be an active part of the community through participating in a variety of civic organizations and activities, Chamber of Commerce events, and building relationships with businesses and individuals throughout Oconee County.

Cultural Affairs and Tourism Committee:

The Cultural Affairs and Tourism Committee is made up of seven members: Scott Norris, Elizabeth Hovell, Vicky Moody, Steve Nedza, Tommy Malcom, and Rob Peecher. They have been exceptional in guiding/advising the Tourism Department and have been the driving force towards achieving the goals set forth by the Tourism Department. Their expertise will be greatly valued by the Tourism Department during the current fiscal year.

General Attendance to the Welcome Center/Eagle Tavern:

Overall attendance to the Welcome Center and Eagle Tavern has increased, which is due to an increase in co-op marketing with our affiliated organizations such as the Antebellum Trail and Historic Heartland. Additionally, we welcomed four motorcoach tour groups and have more tour groups scheduled to visit us as this segment of travel continues to grow. We see a large number of visitors from the Southeast region of the United States as well as many international visitors, primarily from European countries.



Oconee Farmer's Market



Entrance at Eagle Tavern



UTILITIES

The mission of the Oconee County Utility Department is to provide potable water in a quality and quantity that meets the needs of our residential and commercial customers and provide treatment of wastewater for commercial, institutional and industrial customers.

Improvements and upgrades needed in our water and sewer systems are monitored throughout the year. During FY14:

- ♦ Waterline extension was completed on Elder Road and county water service is now available in this area.
- ♦ During the year, Daniells Bridge Road was the location of 3,500 linear feet of replaced sewer lines.

Installation of water and/or sewer lines can be an inconvenience for those neighborhoods where construction is performed. However, the Utility Department is mindful of the residents affected and makes every effort to minimize property disturbance.

During the past four years (see chart below), water customers have increased by approximately 9% and sewer customers increased by 26%. Commercial growth has contributed to the increase in our sewer customers.



Water supply is critical to the future of Oconee County, and the Hard Labor Creek Reservoir is on track. All land has been acquired for the reservoir site and the dam is under construction with an approximate completion in 2015. The project consists of 1,370 acres needed for the lake site and buffers required by the EPD. According to an intergovernmental agreement with Walton County, Oconee owns 28.8% of the Reservoir. This percentage should provide Oconee a water supply of approximately 15 million gallons per day. In comparison, the Bear Creek Reservoir provides approximately four million gallons per day with an ownership percentage of 12%. With the Bear Creek and Hard Labor Creek Reservoirs, Oconee County's water supply should be able to support our residential, commercial and industrial demands for many years into the future.

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Water Customers | 8,690 | 8,803 | 9,093 | 9,591 |
| Sewer Customers | 1,455 | 1,534 | 1,638 | 1,959 |
| Total Water Mains (miles) | 285 | 285 | 286 | 288 |
| Water Mains Replaced (miles) | 0 | 1.2 | 0 | 2.0 |
| Total Sewer Mains (miles) | 73.3 | 73.3 | 73.3 | 73.3 |
| Sewer Mains Replaced (miles) | 0 | 1.1 | 0 | 0.5 |
| Base Residential Rate (water) | \$18.00 | \$19.00 | \$19.00 | \$19.00 |
| Base Commercial Rate (water) | \$18.00 | \$19.00 | \$19.00 | \$19.00 |
| # Radio Read Meters Replaced | 2,460 | 1,400 | 1,800 | 2,300 |
| Unaccounted for Water (%) | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

OCONEE COUNTY FY14 BY THE NUMBERS



Individual service trips provided by Senior Center



Retail jobs created since the end of the recession in 2009



Miles covered by Animal Control officers acting as first responders



New business licenses issued by Code Enforcement

4.4%
Average monthly unemployment rate, the lowest in Georgia during FY14



Volunteer coaches involved in Parks and Recreation programs



Average response time (in min.) of trained fire rescue personnel

819
New water and sewer customers added during FY14



Visitors that stopped by the Oconee County Welcome Center



Revenue generated from inmate housing for county general fund



Tourism dollars spent within the county during the past calendar year



Circulation rate for Oconee Co. Libraries (state average = 5%)

YOUR \$2,000 TAX BILL...

72.87% BOARD OF EDUCATION **(\$1,457) – 18.50**
26.34% BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **(\$527) – 6.69 mils (Unincorp)**
0.79% STATE OF GEORGIA **(\$16) – .20**

In FY14 For Every \$100 in Property Taxes, You Paid.....



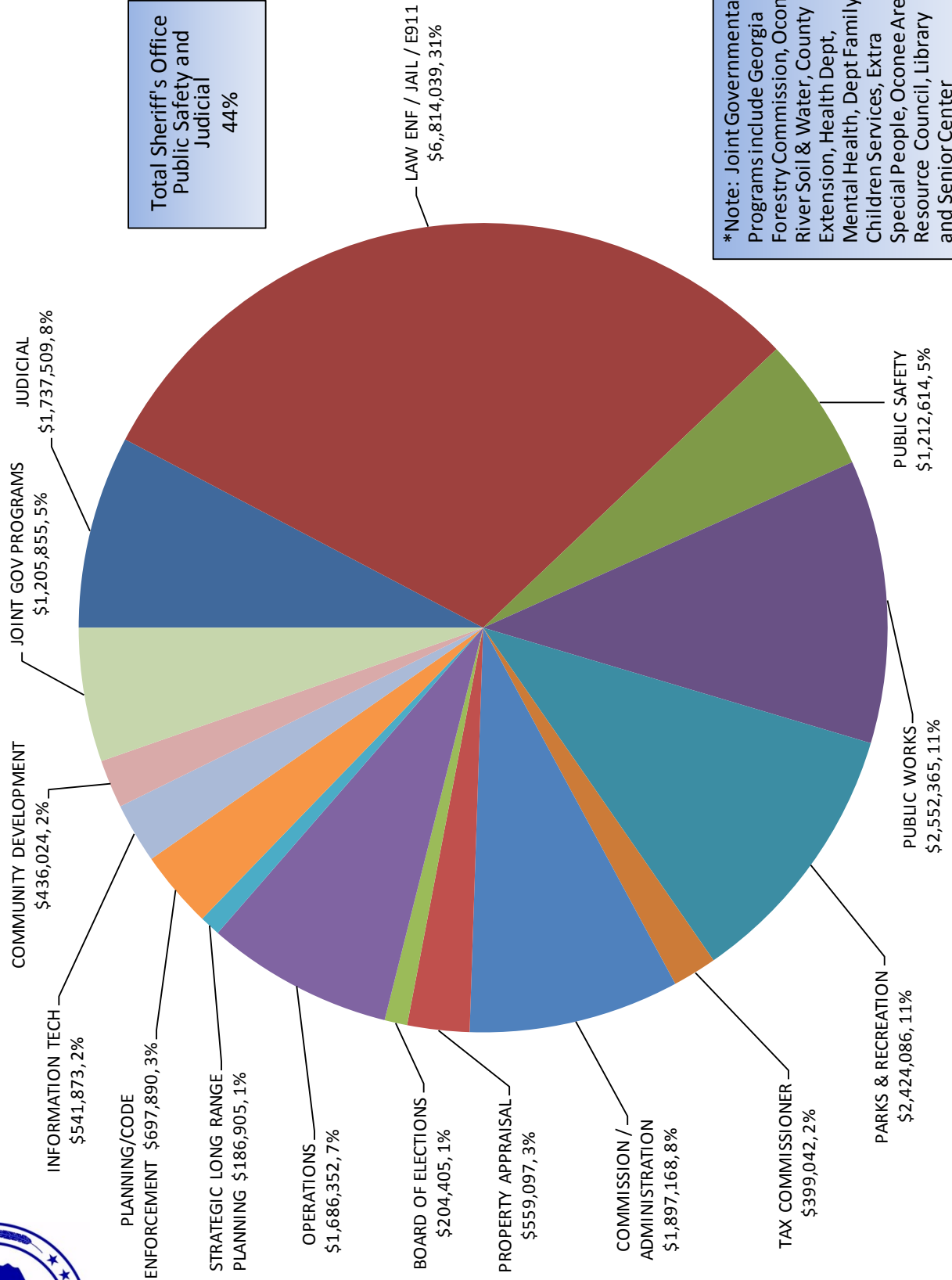
School Maintenance &
Operations (\$68.93) and
School Bond (\$3.94) - \$72.87



Unaudited



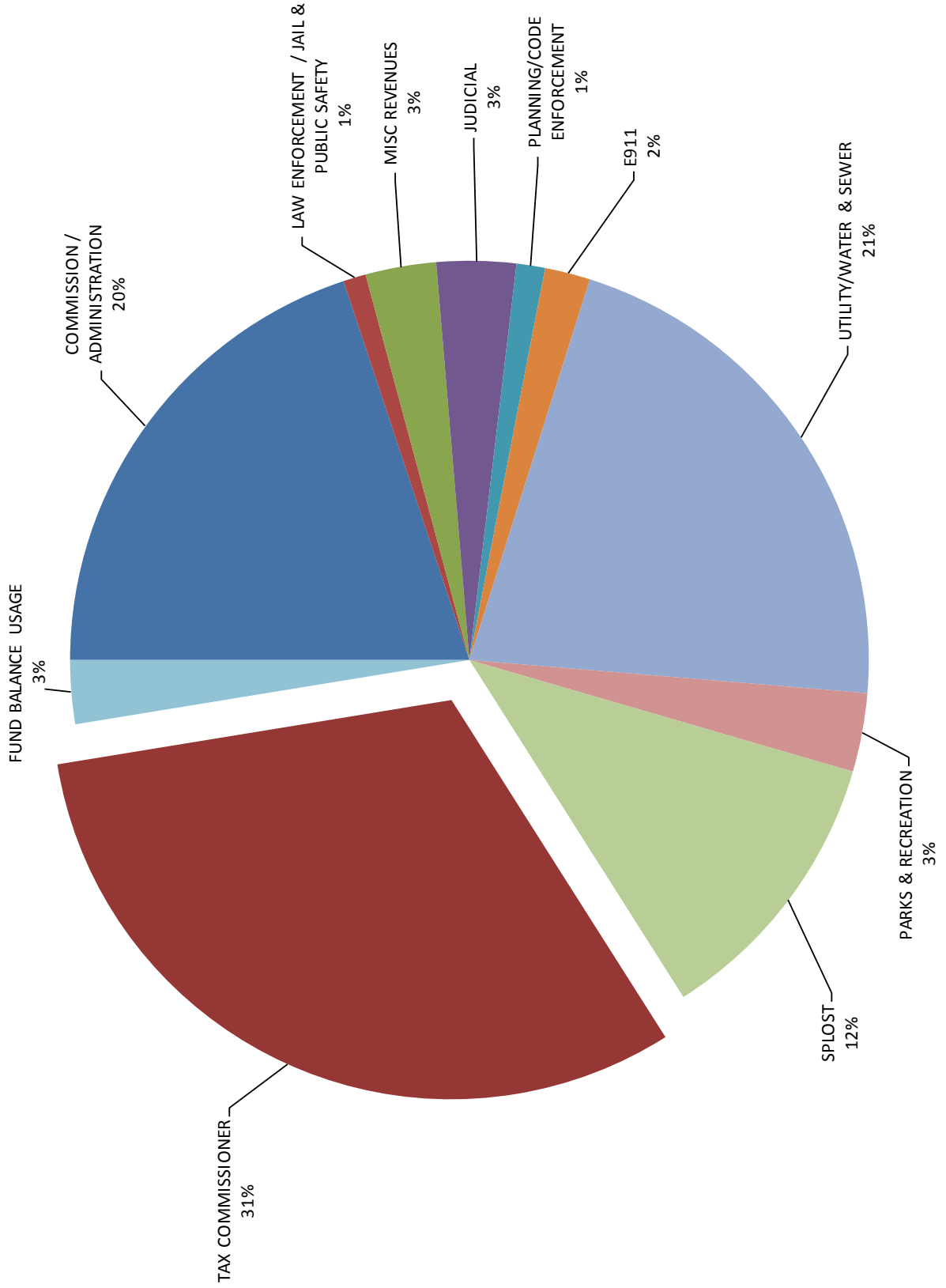
FY14 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



***Note:** Joint Governmental Programs include Georgia Forestry Commission, Oconee River Soil & Water, County Extension, Health Dept, Mental Health, Dept Family & Children Services, Extra Special People, Oconee Area Resource Council, Library and Senior Center

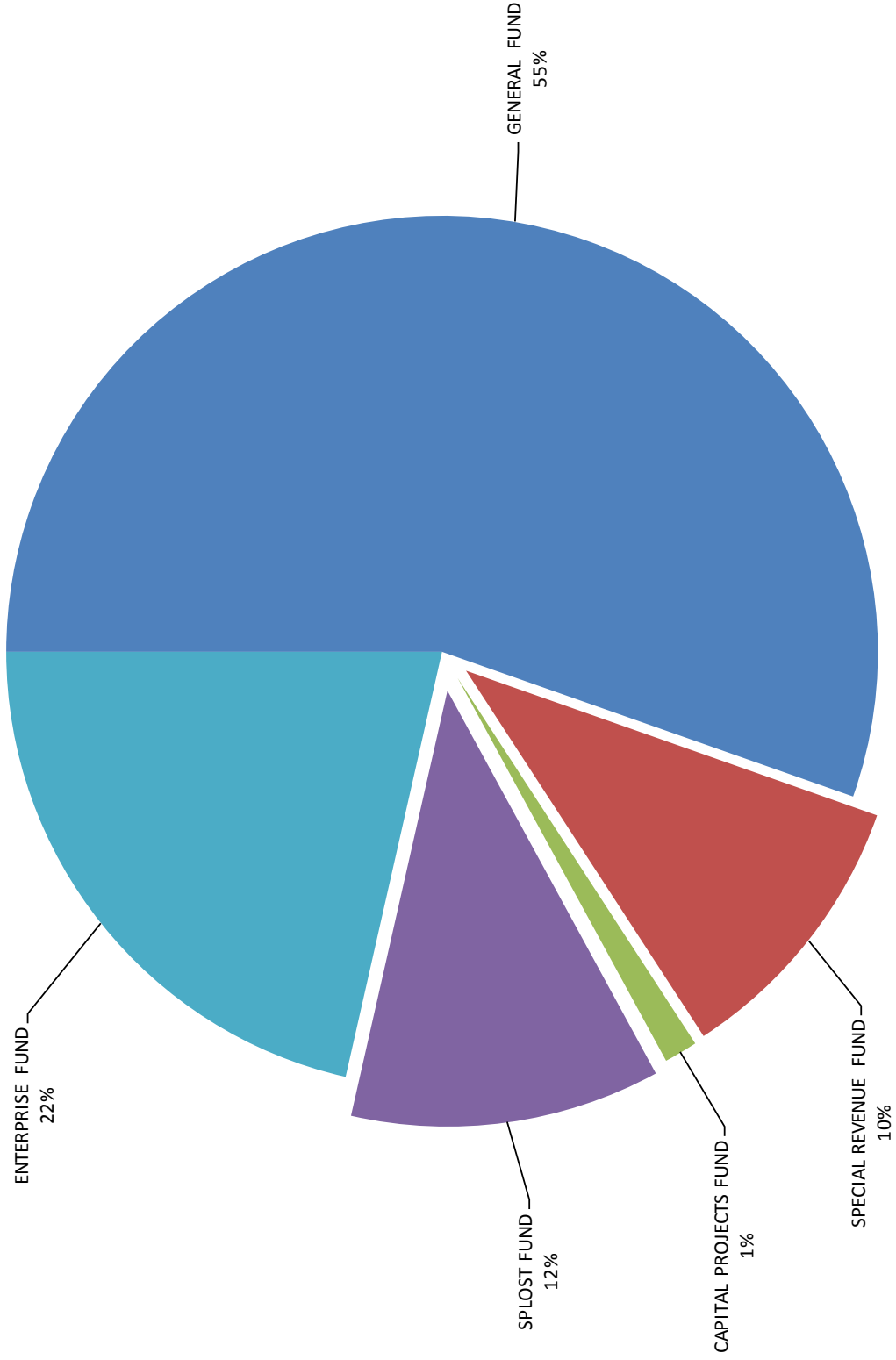


FY14 Budget - All Revenues - \$36,553,967





FY14 Budget - All Expenditures - \$36,553,967



Board of Commissioners

Melvin Davis, Chairman

Jim Luke, Post 1

John Daniell, Post 2

Margaret S. Hale, Post 3

Mark Saxon, Post 4

Constitutional Officers

David Anglin, Probate Judge

Scott Berry, Sheriff

Jennifer Riddle, Tax Commissioner

Angela Elder-Johnson, Clerk of Courts

Elected Officials

David Sweat, Chief Superior Court Judge

Patrick Haggard, Superior Court Judge

Lawton Stephens, Superior Court Judge

Ken Mauldin, District Attorney

Ed Carson, Coroner

Year in Review

Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2014